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A Hindu widow in India has full ownership rights to property--including the right to sell-- allotted to her by the head of a joint family following the death of her husband, the Indian Supreme Court recently ruled. In clarifying the concept of "maintenance," or support of a widow and her family after her husband's death, the Court ruled that if property is given in lieu of a lump sum of money toward maintenance, the widow should have full ownership of the property. The decision overturns a Rajasthan High Court ruling which limited a widow's rights, allowing her to reside in, but neither own nor sell, her home.

Water in the holy Ganga is now officially fit for bathing, but not yet fit for drinking, reports the Ganga Action Plan. The committee was formed to monitor the successful efforts to halt pollution of the river by sewage and industrial effluents in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal.

Ohio's Hindu temple of Cincinnati, a 15,000-square-foot structure on 100-acres of wooded land, has completed its structural work and is installing sixteen five-foot deities including Lords Ayyappan and Murugan. The Palamudir Solai Murugan deity has already been donated by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami. Fund-raising is now underway for shrines

and other deities. Contact: Hindu Society of Greater Cincinnati, P.O. Box 19399, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45219, USA.

Karnataka's tribals are tired of conversion attempts by both Christians and Hindus. Hindustan Times reports, "A senior tribal activist says that efforts at conversion were systematic and well-planned." But, "Tribals consider themselves 'native worshippers' with their own Gods and customs which fall outside the purview of any religion, including Hinduism. The traditions and culture of the tribals date back 50,000 years, with the present generation in no mood to give up their (constitutionally-guaranteed) spiritual autonomy."

An 82-year-old Catholic priest and a 50-year-old nun have been convicted of converting 94 Oraon tribals to Christianity in Madhya Pradesh and sentenced to six-months "rigorous imprisonment." District Magistrate C.L. Patel acknowledged that the tribals were not converted against their will, but said not informing the magistrate prior to the baptisms violated the 1968 Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantrata Adhiniyam. Bail was posted for the two and their sentence appealed.

Muslims in Yorkshire, England, are opting out of religious education (RE) classes in local schools, in a protest against a Christian bias in the curriculum. The 1988 Education Reform Act which requires RE classes to "reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian," also allows parents to withdraw their children. So far, at least 1,500 children have been kept out of the classes. Educators fear the protest will spread to London.

Conflict between opposing factions of sannyasins within the Shri Narayana Mutt in Sivagiri, Kerala, has escalated into serious political ramifications for Kerala's Chief Minister A.K. Antony after his decision to send a peacekeeping contingent of 500 police to the mutt. Two hundred people were injured and the ashram damaged when police confronted 2,000 supporters of Swami Saswathikananda, leader of one of the sannyasi factions. The other faction is led by Swami Prakashananda, who was named to head the mutt last June by Kerala's High Court.

The cosmic dance and the evolution of the soul are among the themes of "Anandathandavam," the first film by physician-turned-movie-maker, Dr. Raghurami Reddy. Already hailed as a profound success, the film is said to capture the pristine purity of the classical dance form on celluloid. "I was surprised to note that these Thandavas denote and depict the evolution of the entire cosmos, following the quintessence of the Vedanta," said Reddy. Hinduism Today editors spoke with Mr. Reddy in Madras in early February. The director explained that the main theme of the film is immortality, and overcoming the fear of death. The film is set for release in August in Tamil, Telegu, Hindi and Malayalam.

The "Flat Tax" being touted by some Republican candidates for US president as a cure-all reform to the US income tax system would set a single tax rate and eliminate "tax deductible" contributions entirely. Such a system would dramatically impact USA Hindu non-profit institutions.

Bodhgaya's Mahabodhi Temple, considered Buddhism's holiest

shrine, continues to be embroiled in conflict. Buddhists want control of the temple, now governed under the Bodhgaya Temple Act of 1949 by a board of four Buddhists, four Hindus, and one Hindu collector as the ex-officio chairman. "If Muslims, Sikhs and Christians can manage their shrines, why can't Buddhists?" asks Bhante Anand of the Buddha Gaya Mahabodhi All India Action Committee. Buddhists object to Hindu rites being conducted, and claim five idols of Lord Buddha were converted by Hindus into Panch Pandavs. That led to confrontation in 1992 and the campaign to liberate the shrine.